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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: STATEMENT ON ABKHAZIA JIPRM MEETING

11. Post is authorized to make the following statement at the July 16, 2009, meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna.

Begin text:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

The United States welcomes the July 14 meeting of the joint incident prevention and response mechanism for the Abkhazia region of Georgia. We view this initial meeting as an important first step towards strengthening security and stability in the region, and hope to see meetings convened on a regular basis in the future.

We urge the representatives of the South Ossetian region of Georgia to lift the conditions they have placed on the further implementation of the mechanism, and to put aside differences and engage constructively in discussions of pressing security concerns.

Ongoing incidents along the administrative boundary lines underscore the need for an effective mechanism to prevent these incidents from escalating. Uninhibited access for international monitors to the whole of Georgia, including its South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions, is critically important to prevent violence and promote respect for human rights.

Madam Chairwoman, the United States remains convinced that the international community can play a vital role in restoring security and stability in Georgia. We firmly support OSCE, UN, and EU coordination of the Geneva discussions, and hope to see concrete progress in future meetings. We also remain ready to work with our partners to find a way to continue the OSCE's valuable work in Georgia, which was brought to a halt by Russia's rejection in May of a status-neutral proposal put forward by the Greek Chairmanship and supported by the overwhelming majority of OSCE participating States.

The United States will continue to advocate an international presence throughout Georgia, including its Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, and to call for free and unhindered humanitarian access to the separatist regions, as provided for in UN Security Council Resolution 1866 last February, and in the August 12 cease-fire agreement. We will also continue to urge respect for the human rights of all individuals in the conflict areas, and to call for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

Madam Chairwoman, the United States remains deeply concerned by the fact that Russia continues to flout the provisions of the August 12 and September 8 agreements, under which Russia committed not only to withdraw its troops to the positions held prior to the start of hostilities, but also to provide free and unhindered humanitarian access to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia. Russia's decision to characterize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent does not relieve Russia of these commitments.

The United States remains committed to peaceful conflict resolution, and will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

End text.
CLINTON